

Montana WIC Program Retailer Newsletter



Winter 2009

New WIC Foods Training Sessions Complete!

The New WIC Foods training conference calls were conducted by the State WIC Office Retail Services staff with follow up support by Local Agency Retail Coordinators.

Over 239 people attended the training sessions that focused on the changes in the WIC Program taking place November 30th. We had at least one representative from each and every grocery store, LARC's and representatives from corporate offices of some of the chain stores. We had a good time with the discussions that went on in some of the calls and were asked a lot of great questions.

Thank you again for your participation and willingness to work through this change with us. Your dedication to your communities is evident in your attitudes and your everyday dealings with WIC customers. You are truly appreciated.

If you have feedback, questions, or product availability issues, please plan to join WIC staff for a **"How's It Going?"** conference call. Four calls have been scheduled and you are encouraged to participate - but not required.

- Tuesday, December 15, 2009 9-11 am or 2-4 pm
 - Tuesday, January 26, 2010 9-11 am or 2-4 pm
- Call-in number: 1-866-910-4857, Pass code: 768324

Montana WIC Facts - November 2009

- WIC participants served - 20,789
- Authorized retailers - 204
- Benefits (checks) paid - 46,268
- Benefits (checks) rejected - 358
- Top rejection reasons:
 - ⇒ Missing stamp - 183
 - ⇒ Illegible stamp - 64
 - ⇒ Over Max Price - 35
 - ⇒ Missing Signature - 33

Please share this information with your staff.

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Follow-up Questions and Answers from Training

- Q. Is jicama allowed to be purchased with a Fruit & Vegetable Benefit (FVB)?
A. Yes. WIC customers may purchase jicama with a FVB as it is not a potato.
- Q. If a WIC customer uses a \$10.00 FVB to purchase fruit and vegetables, and she gets home and her lettuce is bad, can she return it for cash?
A. No. Any foods purchased in conjunction with any type of WIC transaction may not be returned for cash. In this case the WIC customer would be able to exchange her package of lettuce for another package of lettuce.
- Q. If a WIC customer tries to return a food item purchased with either a standard WIC benefit or FVB, can they exchange it for a different food item?
A. No. If the food item they purchased is spoiled or rotten, they can exchange the item purchased for the exact same item.
- Q. Our store doesn't have the 16oz bread - can we substitute a 20oz loaf?
A. No. Only the 16oz loaves listed on the food list are approved for purchase with a WIC benefit.
- Q. What if a WIC customer needs a different infant formula, can we exchange the infant formula they purchased at customer service?
A. No. If a WIC customer wants to exchange their infant formula for another type of formula, please refer them back to the Local Agency WIC office. The Local Agency WIC office will handle the change of infant formulas. If the formula is damaged it may be exchanged for the exact same item.
- Q. Is popcorn allowed to be purchased with a FVB?
A. No. WIC customers may not purchase popcorn with a FVB.
- Q. Can WIC customers purchase the refrigerated 64 oz orange juices?
A. No. WIC does not allow refrigerated juices, even for orange juice. WIC customers must purchase juice from either the juice aisle or the frozen juice section of your grocery store.
- Q. Can we sell smaller jars or the plastic 2-pack of fruit and vegetable baby food?
A. No. The authorized size for fruit and vegetable baby food is 4 oz jars only. Stores cannot substitute jar sizes of baby food. The authorized size for meats is 2.5 oz jars only.
- Q. Can WIC customers purchase frozen beans (lentils) with their FVB?
A. Yes. There is no variety of bean requirement on frozen beans. For example, a WIC customer can only purchase lentil type beans (Black, Pinto, etc.) with their WIC benefit when canned beans are listed. However, when they use a FVB, they can purchase frozen Lima beans.
- Q. Are WIC customers allowed to purchase organic products with their FVB?
A. Yes. The FVB may be used for an eligible fruit and/or vegetable whether it is organic or not.
- Q. What if sugar is listed in the ingredients for Kidney Beans or any other canned lentils?
A. Canned beans with small amounts of sugar are WIC approved. Small amounts of sugar are added to some foods during the canning process to maintain the quality and structure of the food.
- Q. What if a bag of frozen vegetables has salt in the ingredient list?
A. Salt is not considered a flavoring and the product would be allowed.
- Q. The transition benefits have a line that says "New WIC Benefit & Foods". Do participants get an additional food item for this?
A. No, this line indicates that this benefit needs to be used with the new yellow WIC Food List.
- Q. Can a WIC customer purchase a box of breakfast cereal smaller than 12 ounces?
A. No. The smallest size box approved for purchase with a WIC benefit is 12 ounces.

Redeeming and Processing the Fruit & Vegetable Benefit (FVB)

Before depositing benefits (checks), bookkeepers should examine them for errors and then imprint them with the authorized WIC retailer stamp.

(Follow the instructions below or refer to the WIC Retail Reference Manual page 20-26)

Did the cashier accept the benefit within proper dates?

Did the cashier legibly write in BLACK INK the total in the "Amount of Sale" box?

Does the total seem reasonable for the items that are listed on the benefit?

Does the total amount exceed the maximum value of the Fruit & Vegetable Benefit (FVB)?

Did the store associate have the customer sign the benefit and is the signature in the box?

There should be NO handwriting of any kind in the retailer stamp box.

Imprint the benefit with the WIC stamp using BLACK INK in the proper box.

Is the stamp imprint dark enough and readable?

The benefit is now ready for deposit to the bank.

Please remind all cashiers and bookkeepers that the highest dollar amount accepted on a FVB is the amount printed on it. For example, if a \$6.00 Fruit & Vegetable Benefit is redeemed, the most this FVB should be tendered for is \$6.00.

Any FVB tendered for an amount higher than the amount printed on it will not be paid and returned to the store. The FVB and a copy of the transaction receipt may be sent to the State WIC office for consideration of review and adjusted for payment.

Rejected Standard WIC Benefits & Fruit & Vegetable Benefit (FVB)

Returned WIC benefits with **missing** or **unreadable** vendor stamps may be corrected and directly re-deposited within sixty (60) days of the First Day to Use.

Returned WIC benefits **with a total purchase price that exceeds the maximum reimbursable amount or for altered dollar amount** must be approved by the State WIC Office before it may be re-deposited. These rejections cannot be directly re-deposited. Benefits exceeding the maximum allowable amount must be sent to the State WIC office accompanied with a printed copy of the electronic transaction or copy of the receipt.

Returned WIC benefits missing the authorized signature, or the authorized signature is placed out of the signature box, or redeemed prior to the First Day to Use or redeemed greater than the Last Day to Use, or missing the total amount in the Pay Exactly box will not be paid nor accepted for validation.

Redemption issues are easier to resolve before they are sent to the bank. Please call Retail Services at 1-800-433-4298 option 2 or (406)444-4746 for guidance.

Returned WIC benefits that the retailer wishes the Montana WIC Program to consider for approval need to be sent to:

Montana WIC Program
Attn: Carrie Reynolds
P.O. Box 202951
Helena MT 59602-2951

Submitting Items for Future Food List Consideration

Specific foods are selected for use in the Montana WIC Program through review by a panel of individuals using evaluation criteria based on federal regulations, availability, packaging, cost, product acceptability, marketing approval and nutritive value.

To submit a food item for review, please send the product information and packaging label to Chris Fogelman's attention at the address below or cfogelman@mt.gov. The items will be reviewed for addition to the Fall 2010 Food List and need to be submitted by April 30, 2010.

Montana WIC Program
PO Box 202951
Helena MT 59620-2951

Infant Formula, Infant Cereal and Baby Food Exemptions

Retailers who do not have any infants on the WIC Program that utilize their store may contact the State WIC Office to request an exemption to the stocking requirement. The exemption form needs to be completed and returned to the State office before the exemption is valid.

If granted an exemption, the retailer must be able to supply the infant formula, infant cereal and/or baby food within 24-48 hours if a request for these WIC food items is received from a participant. If the retailer is unable to supply the infant formula, infant cereal or baby food within the 24-48 hour time frame, the retailer must contact the State WIC Office to request an exemption be made to extend the time frame to within five (5) days.

The State WIC Office will make a determination if an exemption can be granted in all cases. The retailer will then either be issued an exemption or be given notice that they must meet the stocking requirements.

Department of Public Health & Human Services Montana WIC Program

1400Broadway, Cogswell Bldg. C305
PO Box 202951
Helena MT 59620-2951

Phone: (406)444-5533
1-800-433-4298 Option 2
Fax: (406)444-0239

www.wic.mt.gov

225 copies of MONTANA WIC RETAILER NEWSLETTER were published at an estimated cost of \$0.122 per copy, for a total cost of \$27.45 for printing and \$99.00 for distribution.

Who do you call?

Retailers should contact their **Local WIC Agency** for concerns regarding complaints and general program questions.

Contact **Trish Kurek (406-444-5530)** at the State WIC office if your store will be changing ownership or you have questions about your contract.

Contact **Carrie Reynolds (406-444-4746)** at the State WIC office when issues arise with WIC checks or prices change for WIC approved foods.

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION IN ALL ITS PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, GENDER, RELIGION, AGE, DISABILITY, OR POLITICAL BELIEFS. (NOT ALL PROHIBITED BASES APPLY TO ALL PROGRAMS.) PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WHO REQUIRE ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR COMMUNICATION OF PROGRAM INFORMATION (BRAILLE, LARGE PRINT, AUDIOTAPES, ETC.) SHOULD CONTACT USDA'S TARGET CENTER AT (202) 720-2600 (VOICE AND TDD.)

TO FILE A COMPLAINT OF DISCRIMINATION, WRITE USDA, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ADJUDICATION AND COMPLIANCE, 1400 INDEPENDENCE AVE. SW, WASHINGTON D.C. 20250-9410 OR CALL (202) 720-5964 (VOICE AND TDD.)
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